

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Collation can be carried out at a high speed without reducing the accuracy thereof, whereby processing of identifying documents is accurately performed at a high speed. To this end, characteristic data of a predetermined pattern is registered in advance. Characteristic data in a first area greater than an area of the predetermined pattern registered in advance in an image to be identified is compared and collated with characteristic data of the predetermined pattern. A second area smaller than the first area is cut out from the first area based on the result of comparison, so that characteristic data of an image in the second area is compared and collated with the characteristic data of the predetermined pattern, thus making it possible to identify the predetermined pattern contained in the image based on the result of comparison.